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## Polluted Site Could Become Business Park

**One owner envisions a new Bremerton marine business center, complete with a marina and boat repair center, between Pennsylvania and Thompson.**

By Christopher Dunagan,  
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May 23, 2006

Bremerton

Bremerton officials have taken the first tentative steps that could transform a polluted industrial site on Pennsylvania Avenue into a modern marine business park.

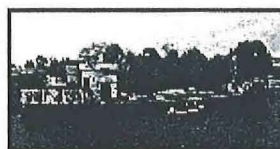
In one concept, the business park on Port Washington Narrows would include a boat repair center, boat dealership and marine supply store, as well as a marina with a boat haul-out and dry storage.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Bremerton a \$200,000 "brownfields" grant to assess pollution on the site and develop a cleanup plan. According to early estimates, it could take an additional \$150,000 or more to complete the assessment. Until that work is done, nobody knows the ultimate cost of the cleanup, said Phil Williams, Bremerton's Public Works director.



Carolyn J. Yaschur | Kitsap Sun

Land owner Trip McConkey hopes to see his family's property on Pennsylvania Avenue cleaned of toxic pollution. McConkey has worked with the city of Bremerton to obtain a grant to begin an assessment of the environmental problems.



Kitsap Sun File Photo

An abandoned tanker, The Ked, rests on the waterfront near the contaminated site on Pennsylvania Avenue. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded Bremerton a \$200,000 brownfields grant to assess pollution on the site and develop a cleanup plan.

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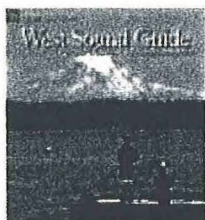
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The 3.7-acre site is owned by the Paul McConkey family and Natacha Sesko. Most, if not all, of the pollution was deposited prior to their ownership, officials say. A series of businesses starting in the 1920s included a coal-gasification plant, fuel-oil storage and distribution company, sandblasting/painting/electroplating operation and salvage yard.

Washington Department of Ecology ranked the site a "1" on a scale from 1 to 5, meaning it is among the highest-priority sites for cleanup in the state. Toxic chemicals there include hydrocarbons and other compounds associated with oil and gas.

Williams said the city initiated the grant to encourage redevelopment of the area, create new jobs, provide public access to the water and clean up the environment. Under EPA rules, a public entity must submit the grant.

"The whole point of this entire exercise is to identify exactly what the environmental issues are on that site," Williams said. "What are the contaminants and how best might they be remediated, treated or removed?"

Kathleen Byrne-Barrantes, who wrote the EPA grant proposal, said there are several options for the ultimate development.

"I see this as an interesting combination of public and private, business and cleanup," she said. "I think everyone is going to benefit from this project."

The McConkey family owns about two-thirds of the contaminated property. That land was purchased by Paul McConkey in the 1980s.

"When my father bought it, he had no idea it was polluted," said Paul's son, Trip. "The prudent and logical thing to do is figure out what is under there and get it cleaned up. If they want the McConkeys to clean it up, we will go out of business."

Trip McConkey said he was grateful to city officials for seeing the potential of the land and to Art Anderson and Associates for developing a site plan used to obtain the grant. How much financial responsibility will fall to the McConkeys and Sesko is hard to say, he noted.

"As current land owners, we are liable," he said. "It does not look like we will come out unscathed. ... I don't sleep well at night knowing I'm sitting on an ecological problem. If we can figure out what is under there and who is liable, then we can start dealing with the problem."

Besides the property owners, liable parties may include a series of gas and oil companies that owned the property in the past.

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McConkey said he has been talking to many experts about what to do. The best scenario, he explained, would be to redevelop the property between Pennsylvania Avenue and Thompson Drive with clean businesses oriented to boats and marine operations. Condominiums with a water view could be built on a portion of the site.

Todd Shipyards and Pacific Shipyards both expressed some interest in the site, McConkey said, but they seem to need a lot of land.

"At some point, we would have to decide if they are right for the area," he said. "They would mean jobs, but I think they might want something bigger."

Williams said he is focused on hiring a consultant to lay out a plan for assessing the environmental problems.

"We'd like to get moving on it," he said.

If the funding falls short, options include seeking further assistance from the EPA or seeking a 50-percent grant from the state, with the other half of the funding coming from liable parties.

The public will have a say in how the project moves forward, Williams said. He expects to issue a fact sheet prior to a public meeting sometime this summer.



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